



Above, Airman 1st Class Abel Salas (silver) and Airman Chris Hill demonstrate how to provide team back up for fire hose use. Right, Tech. Sgt. James Drake reviews lesson plans for training firemen. Below, the P-23 fire rescue vehicle can lay down a wall of water up to 275 feet away.

Fire fighters put their lives on the line every day

**By Ms. Monique Staskiewicz
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The phone rings in the dispatch office. The pilot of a B-52 aircraft carrying 20,000 pounds of live bombs is reporting unsafe landing gear. This sudden emergency seems like a nightmare, but to Team Nellis' fire department, it's just a normal day.

"The busiest time for Nellis firemen is when they work on the flightline," said Senior Master Sgt. Christopher Parks, deputy fire chief, 99th Civil Engineer Squadron. "We see many aircraft emergencies a day, sometimes several of them are occurring at the same time. Fortunately, the pilot and jet land safely almost every time. For that rare emergency resulting in an accident, we are ready to spring into action."

Practicing fighting all types of fires, responding to in-flight emergencies and conducting training are all part of the job. But fire fighters agree the best part is helping people.

"The most important thing is to help people," said Sgt. Parks. "Whether it is a simple response like helping a child out of a locked vehicle or a fire response, being able to help is the most gratifying part."

Many firemen come to the job for different reasons. Sgt. Parks chose his destiny by following the suggestion of an Air Force recruiter.



Photos by Ms. Monique Staskiewicz

"I didn't know there were firemen in the military. I was the first person in my immediate family to join the Air Force," said Sgt. Parks. "I was into mechanics and driving things and wanted to be a truck driver. The recruiter said why don't you become a fireman, there is driving, you can go fast and use sirens. So I did and found that there was a lot more that went along with it. I'm glad I did it."

Nellis has four fire stations on base with 87 military and civilian firemen serving the community and local area.

"Locally, we have agreements with the surrounding community to help assist in emergencies," said Sgt. Parks. "We have one 2,000-gallon tanker and one 5,000-gallon tanker to help in responses. Nellis owns three P-23 fire rescue vehicles. These are the new top-of-the-line vehicles that have capabilities of spreading water 250 to 275 feet."

Fire protection has evolved in the last few years, from fighting house fires to delicate swift water rescues, said Sgt. Parks.

Nellis fire station averages 1,800 rescue responses a year. Because of the wide range of emergencies, firemen are required to be jacks-of-all-trades.

"The goal for Nellis' Fire Department is to provide service for every type rescue including fire rescue, medical rescue, hazardous rescues and response rescues. We are here to provide a safe place for Nellis community to work and live," said Fire Chief Mr. James Boley, 99th CES.

Firemen spend about half of their days training for emergencies. They know how to deal with fuel spills or emergency shutdowns of an aircraft. They know how to respond to a missile response and how to fight forest or underground fires, said Sgt. Parks.

"The hands-on experience obtained by our firemen give them the expertise and confidence to perform in times of need," said Mr. Boley.

"We're willing to put our lives on the line every day," said Sgt. Parks. "We are like an insurance policy for the base. We don't get paid for what we do, we get paid for what we're willing to do."

For Nellis Team emergencies call 652-9630. 911 calls are relayed through the county system and response could be delayed.



Above, Senior Airman William Dionne, 99th Civil Engineer Squadron, checks out a fire truck engine. The inspections are conducted daily to ensure the vehicles are capable of responding to any emergency on a moment's notice. Below, Airman 1st Class Abel Salas dons his fire protection suit as part of a daily exercise requirement. Each member of the fire response team is able to don their complete fire protection ensemble in less than 60 seconds.

